Introduction

'The Brutal Tap'

In 1919, the painter-novelist and impresario Wyndham Lewis reflected on a major stylistic sea-change: 'the Victorian age' he wrote, 'produced a morass of sugary comfort and amiableness, indulged men so much that they became guys of sentiment – or sentimental guys. Against this "sentimentality" people of course reacted. So the brutal tap was turned on. For fifty years it will be the thing to be brutal, "unemotional."[1] Recently home from the trenches, where he had worked as war artist for the British government – and grimly subdued by what he found there – the high modernist Lewis made his claim dispassionately. In the previous decade, he implied, he and his contemporaries had written brutally and unsentimentally because the slush of the late nineteenth century left them no choice. The switch was inevitable rather than inspired, a latest development in the natural ebb and flow of artistic taste and fashion. 'The "movement" in art', he wrote 'like the attitude of the community to art, is not a thing to be superior about, though it is a thing you may be superior to'.[2] Less than ten years on from his salons with Ezra Pound, T.E. Hulme and others, and only five after his Vorticist manifesto *Blast*, Lewis was suggesting high modernism as the literary symptom of an anti-sentimentalist fever that had taken hold in the West, and that he believed would endure – whether writers and artists liked it or not – until the 1960s.

This special issue responds to Lewis' hypothesis, attempting a survey of literary modernism from the early 1910s until the Second World War that tests the 'brutal' and "unemotional" shift he describes. Though it doesn't necessarily follow him in down playing modernist artistic inspiration, it asks a set of questions suggested by his statement: how did language and attitudes harden from early century modernism onwards? How did modernists' subject matter reflect this? And what did it mean in terms of new approaches to narrative and form? Like so many avant-gardists before him, Lewis was looking to distance himself from the fashionable 'thing' his once radical approach had become, but he was and still is its clearest exemplar, and for this reason remains a good starting point. Indeed, ever since the publication of Tyrus Miller's *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction and the Arts Between the Wars* in 1999 –

in which Lewis is foregrounded as a precursor to Djuna Barnes, Samuel Beckett, Henry Miller and others – Lewis' work has been synonymous with a 'dead', affectless or disembodied aesthetic that made its way into modernist work between the two world wars. The human body as grotesque, automated, machine or puppet-like was Lewis' dominant trope, and most recent monographs or edited collections on modernism have incorporated Miller's identification of this into their readings of English language experimentalism. Elitist, antagonistic to his peers, and arrogantly convinced of his superior historical significance, Lewis' writing itself is often steered clear of by scholars – and particularly those seeking an opening out of the period to more diverse voices – but the aesthetic Miller identifies through him has had a major impact on the way the period is viewed.

The larger purpose of 'Anti-Humanist Modernisms', however, lies beyond Lewis' claim and with more complex questions of philosophy. Extending Lewis' reading of a brutal and unemotional milieu, the authors have aimed to consider the intellectual history that informed literary modernism, and – more specifically – to address those same signs of a brutal turn in the context of a larger, more significant one: the rejection of established Enlightenment humanist positions from the late nineteenth century onwards. How did the repulsion authors, poets, painters and philosophers developed towards Enlightenment certitudes affect literary and artistic innovation in the early twentieth century? What political implications did this have? How was that repulsion used, paradoxically, to socially humanistic ends? Finally, in what ways has religion been repurposed by writers, artists and composers in search – like their nineteenth century Romantic counterparts – for an antidote to restrictive models of Reason?

Related questions have preoccupied modernist scholars since at least the 1980s – when the critical conversation moved on from point scoring about the relative worth of reactionary modernist writing to more objective analyses of those politics in a longer intellectual history. From Michael Levenson's *Genealogy of Modernism* (1984) and Peter Nichols' *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (1995) to Paul Sheehan's *Modernism, Narrative and Humanism* (2002), a wealth of material looks at the early modernist period for its reworking of conventional humanist positions. Writing fifteen years after Hugh Kenner's *The Pound Era* – one of the first explicit 'modernist'

studies, and a devotee's attempt to claw Pound and modernism back from the wrong side of history – Levenson reminded the world that Pound and Lewis' fascism and T.S. Eliot and T.E. Hulme's Royalist conservatism had their roots in a form of radical 'egoist' disposition gleaned from the German anarchist Max Stirner. Modernism, Levenson showed, had rebelled against the fallacies of action and inaction with Stirner's mantra in mind: a mantra based, almost a century before the poststructuralists, on the deconstruction of humanity as a meaningful collective entity: '*Man* … is not a person, but an ideal, a spook'.[3]

A decade later than Levenson, Nicholls posited modernism throughout Europe as an affirmative Nietzschean challenge to post-religious arrogance on the one hand, and to the pessimism of a previous generation reared on Arthur Schopenhauer, on the other. In Nietzsche's defiant howl, the avant-garde schools that emerged at the start of the twentieth century found a 'powerful concept of the heroic will with which to overcome the pessimism and inaction now associated with Schopenhauerian decadence'.[4] Sheehan, writing in the early 2000s, understood Schopenhauer's influence to have lasted longer, from the mid nineteenth century all the way through the modernist period up to 1950, and to have contributed to a 'decoupling' of the concept of the human from humanism – a change in thinking that allowed writers to document the human condition but question humanity's centrality or ordained purpose in the world.[5] And Leon Surette, a more old-fashioned hermeneutic analyst, has lately compared the spiritual schemes of T.S. Eliot and his America-based contemporary Wallace Stevens to suggest a wider unexpected skepticism about human perfectibility in religious as well as secular modernist aesthetics.[6]

All of this is in keeping with irrefutable evidence. In Europe, the most daringly avant-garde writers in the first two decades of the twentieth century tended to be skeptical about established democratic ideals and tended also to express their radicalism by asserting older, esoteric religious certainties. For Pound, Lewis and the other 'men of 1914', drawing water from 'the brutal tap' meant using 'concrete' rather than 'abstract' and 'sentimental' aesthetics, but also involved a hankering after ahistorical fixities that led them to dabble in the obscurely mystical and the mythical.[7] If Lewis had no stomach for pre-modernists like W.B. Yeats' Irish folk history, Pound and Eliot were sometimes witting inheritors of the same occultist tradition – magpie-like

collectors of image and idea from myth and theology in a quest for meta-historical meaning that gave the lie to self-determining, self-improving humanity.

In the continental tradition, that same quest was undertaken by writers like Joseph Conrad and Knut Hamsun, who used horrified fictional first person narratives to register doubt about the efficacy of rational thinking as a check on human cruelty and self-interest. In the London of the 1910s, while Lewis and Pound were turning that doubt into a noisy racket, writers like D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Djuna Barnes and Mina Loy used it to foreground animal bodies over constructed social identities. On the continent in the same period, there was a strong precedent for the first form of anti-humanist modernism in the satirical mock-heroic adventure tales of Blaise Cendrars' and in Filippo Tomasso Marinetti's Futurist dream of a fast world emptied of romantic and humanistic sentimentality. And for the second form, Franz Kafka's set the most famous example by his absurdist non-human antidote to the manic compulsivity of human affairs.

Like Paul Sheehan's work, but unlike most other historical accounts of the period, 'Anti-Humanist Modernisms' treats directly the recourse to the body over the mind, the uncertainty about the human capacity for progress led by reason, and the preoccupation with human contingency in dauntingly permanent time, space and materiality; positing these as central to literary responses to the modern in the first half of the twentieth century. It outlines such concerns in the experimental art of the early or high then late modern periods and considers their legacy in the radical literary writers and movements that emerged after World War Two.

Anti-Humanist Postmodernism

Reading modernism as an anti-humanist moment also gives an opportunity to question received ideas about the development of theory after 1945. The questions under discussion – and the larger issue of anti-humanism in the counterculture – had their mid century context in the new theories of ethics, language and history that emerged across the Atlantic after the Second World War. Indeed, as Elizabeth Kuhn points out in her essay 'Toward an Anti-Humanism of Life' – a reference point for various of the authors in this issue – most discussions of anti-humanist philosophy in

literature revolve around the legacy of nineteenth century challenges to Enlightenment conventions not in modernism but in the 1960s philosophical enquiries of European Post-Structuralism or the Neo-Marxist ideas of the Frankfurt school.[8] From Foucault's attack on moral certitude and Jacques Derrida's deconstructions of the relationship between reality and the written word to Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer's treatise on 'the enlightenment as mass deception', there was a growing sense after 1945 that the Western humanist tradition had produced a limiting, malfunctioning model of humanity.[9]

On an author-by-author basis various subjects in this issue have had their objections to humanism suggested as the source of their prescience. The reason many contemporary scholars give for continuing to research the politically problematic T.E. Hulme and Wyndham Lewis, for example, is that the problems with their politics belied and were in fact inextricable from their tendencies towards forward-thinking deconstruction. Hulme – who got many of his ideas about the virtue of classical over romantic art, and of religious over humanist attitudes from the violent French monarchists Action Francaise – has been rehabilitated by Edward P. Commentale and Andrzej Gosiorek as a path-beater for 'some of the most thought-provoking and disruptive modernisms of the twentieth century, such as the post-Marxism of Adorno and [Hannah] Arendt, the phenomenology of [Martin] Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, the deconstruction of [Paul] de Man and Derrida.'[10] Likewise – taking their cue from Frederick Jameson – Shane Weller, Paul Edwards, and Edward Commentale and Andrze Gasiorek have all described Lewis' ambivalent approach to Nietzsche as evidence of an advanced postmodernism: a sign that he was aware, where most of his contemporaries were not, of the futility in seeking grand narratives and authentic truths.[11]

By a similar but politically less fraught token, it has become standard critical practice to regard Samuel Beckett's automatizing and Djuna Barnes' disorientation of the human form not only as subversions of earlier modernist ideas, but preemptive of the collapse postmodernism caused to ideological conceptions of gender and the human. Along with Virginia Woolf, Barnes' refusal of conventional expectations about human and animal, male and female identity have been identified by Bonie Kime Scott as the seeds for later post-modernist corrections to feminist binaries.[12] Drawing

on Elizabeth Kuhn, we suggest such modernists as revolutionary by their anti-humanism long before that philosophy came into common use by left-oriented theoretical schools, post-1945.

Where Sheehan sees Schopenhauer and Darwin as catalysts for a new non-humanist perspective on the human, Kuhn foregrounds Nietzsche in this historical development. By her account anti-humanism is 'a Nietzschean interest that develops through both literary modernism and, later, poststructuralist philosophy, and … knits the twentieth century together in a suspicion of the Enlightenment'; a strain that Nietzsche's aphoristic style rendered as amenable to reactionary as progressive political uses. [13] Significantly, this consolidates the possibility of modernism as intellectual root rather than enemy of Michel Foucault, whose cribbing of Nietzsche to pronounce 'the death of man' is so often understood as a break from the dark and murky past.[14] Before Foucault, before even Ferdinand de Sausserre's deconstruction of human identity through linguistics, and the anthropological uses Claude Levi-Strauss made of that, modernist poetry and prose fiction were destabilized by – and sought to destabilize through – related enquiries.

As Commentale and Gasiorek suggested, those enquiries also had a bearing on the phenomenological skepticism Martin Heidegger expressed about individual consciousness and subjective being. Claimed by Jean-Paul Sartre in 1949 as a fellow 'existentialist atheist', Heidegger in fact repeated many earlier modernist spiritual objections to rationalistic humanist thinking. Answering Sartre – and echoing T.E. Hulme – he worried that 'the highest determinations of the essence of the human being in humanism still do not realize the proper dignity of the human being'.[15] Heidegger's attempt to reassert that dignity via 'the spiritual realm', and his belief that humanism was the product of a limited 'metaphysical projection', enable further understanding of modernist legacies in the postmodern mid to late twentieth century. [16]

Anti-Humanism Now

The literary and theoretical history of anti-humanist thought has a particular practical and political relevance today. In the fall-out from Donald Trump's election to

president, from Britain's vote to leave the EU and the rise of nationalist movements across Europe, it is incumbent on a stunned left-leaning intellectual establishment to recover composure and appraise events soberly, constructively. Alarm at the rejection of values which had for decades been taken as articles of faith – values based on definitions of social progress that were rooted first in the Enlightenment then crystalized in the aftermath of World War Two – can be substituted for productive analysis through a reconsideration of anti-humanism. As such, the issue takes a cue from moral philosopher and historian of ideas John Gray, whose twenty year long rebuttal of Francis Fukiyama's 'end of history' narrative is steeped in Schopenhauer and offers much needed long perspective on current geo-political circumstances.[17]

Gray's *Straw Dogs: On Humans and Other Animals* – which drew in 2002 on Schopenhauer's criticisms of Immanuel Kant to code liberal humanism as the unacknowledged inheritor of religious delusions – has been given new impetus in the scramble to explain the breakdown of what had before seemed a secure, and at last cross-denominational consensus on social justice. While Stephen Pinker and other optimistic psychologists and political and social scientists view the success of viscerally targeted populism as a blip in an otherwise healthy historical trajectory, and remain confident that progress through scientific advancement will prevail, Gray offers a peculiarly modernist reminder of the intractable imperfections that have always characterized human endeavor. His skepticism about the security of progressive gains on equal racial, gender and sexual rights was and still is dismissed by many as doom saying. Now that we're facing the first genuine mass democratic challenge to those gains, though, it would be churlish not to consider it seriously. Modernist literature – so often read in a specialist and scholarly vacuum – has the potential to contribute in positive ways to this current debate about the value of scientism, and the efficacy of traditional liberal humanist approaches.

Henry Mead – who writes in this issue about the clarity T.E. Hulme offers in our age of algorhithmically targeted politics – has drawn important parallels elsewhere between Gray's Isaiah Berlin inspired 'agonized liberalism' and a similar way of thinking among early modernists. This, John Bolin suggests in his article on Samuel Beckett and George Bataille, is what separates anti-humanism from the 'totalising pronouncements of posthumanist discourse'. Rather than optimistically planning for

ontological or epistemological reform, the remit for 'Anti-Humanist Modernisms' was to use literary and literary historical criticism towards a cautious, and indeed agonized critique of anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism. In that respect, the issue takes count of but is less politically strident than the post-humanist theorizing of thinkers like Donna Harraway, N. Katherine Hayles or Cary Wolfe; scholars whose valuable explorations into human, non-human and post-human subjectivities may be compromised by their quest to reorient the human in the world according to a new kind of ethical responsibility. One upshot of the essays in this collection is a critique of their belief – coincident with postmodernism– that perspective can be rebooted through the rebooting of theory.

In keeping with Aaron Jaffe's recent special issue of *Modernism/Modernity* ('Modernist Inhumanisms', 3.23 (2016), ed. by Aaron Jaffe) and Richard Grusin's edited collection of essays *The Non-Human Turn* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015, ed. by Richard Grusin), it stays out, as much post-humanist thinking happily enters into, the problem of how to reconstitute humanism in a different form today. It documents various historical attempts to do so, but is reflective on its own position as one more narrative among many told about the human animal. Like Jaffe and Grusin's collections, 'Anti-Humanist Modernisms' is cautious in its investigation of early to mid century philosophical arguments against human exceptionalism. Rather than wholesale answers, it seeks a clearer picture of the kind of issues modernists grappled with relating to human/animal subjectivity, the dominance of impulse over reason and of the ephemerality of human existence in the context of deep time.

Such cautiousness was mirrored by some of the writers who appear in the pages ahead – the American Trappist Zen poet Thomas Merton, for example, who found the humility he learnt from his religion difficult to square with the solipsism of creative endeavour, and Robinson Jeffers, whose coining of the term 'inhuman' was a call for contemplation of everything but our humanity – but emphatically not by others. At the one extreme, we'll hear about a selection of acerbic critics of humanist self-indulgence, from Lewis in the 1910s and Louis Ferdinand Céline in the thirties to Michel Houellebecq in contemporary letters. At the other, Aldous Huxley emerges as what Imogen Woodberry calls 'a reluctant anti-humanist' – someone who turned his

scepticism about humanist shibboleths to psychologically and spiritually ameliorative ends. Unlike poststructuralist anti-humanism, its earlier modernist iteration was politically diverse, and – even where practiced by writers who recommended utopian rightist politics – tended to be suspicious of redemptive overhauls to entire systems.

That diversity and circumspection makes their early say in philosophical arguments usually associated with theorists of the post-war era especially intriguing, and especially valuable. By reading modernists writers – established and peripheral – for their contradictory applications of philosophical anti-humanist thought, the issue aims to provide much needed, messy historical context for poststructuralist, postmodernist and post-humanist moments that have applied those ideas in ideologically unified ways.

Corporeal-Religious-Ecological-Political

That context is presented in three distinct forms: anti-humanism as expressed through presentation and contemplation of bodily existence; anti-humanism as enthronement of the spirit over the material; anti-humanism in the context of geological deep time; and anti-humanism as the basis for diverse political stances. In the bodily sense, the contributors have put their subjects into conversation with the Copernican revolutions inspired by Darwin in the nineteenth and Freud in the twentieth centuries; making sense of modernist experiments in subjectivity through consideration of the 'human as a problem' rather than a 'given' (in Paul Sheehan's words); thinking about the doubts modernists expressed about the delusional uses humanists put Darwin's discoveries to; and complicating Freud's psychoanalytical revelations by considering their arrogant reification of the self.[18] Likewise – and again in line with Sheehan – Heidegger's rejection of subjectivism and Idealism in favour of a metaphysical 'beingness' provides a valuable backdrop to the questions asked in modernist literature about the human as starting point for ontology.

In the section on anti-humanism and religion, there's necessarily a call back to the Idealism that Heidegger was rejecting – the Kantian credo adopted by and argued over by English language Romantics in the nineteenth century. How did twentieth century modernists, so very often scathing about Romantic paeans to the infinite,

repurpose Romantic proposals for religion as a remedy for a stultifying subservience to Reason? How did they critique this and take it further? Writing in his introduction to 'Modernist Inhumanisms' – which touches on issues he explores in his essay for this collection – Aaron Jaffe draws indirect attention to just one connection between the Kantian Romantic and modernist approach. John Ruskin, the English artist and social reformer who was instrumental in the ideas about art, economics and society driving modernism, followed Coleridge et al in consolidating Kant's correlationism, and used the same to coin the term 'pathetic fallacy'. Hinting at the liberation of nature from human attempts to fit it out with emotion, Ruskin was in fact 'following the standard action plan in the wake of Kant, reserving for science the task of presenting things in relation to each other and for art the task of leveraging relations of things to humans'.[19] The spiritual anti-humanism of modernist writers in this issue is a twentieth century quest to cease grasping for that leverage, and particularly for the leverage over things suggested by the attainment of 'new consciousness'.

From modernism to the American counterculture, fresh doubts accumulated in the twentieth century about the efficacy of philosophies that link such consciousness to the attainment of happiness – doubts that called into question everyone from Marx and Rousseau back to Spinoza and Descartes then Aristotle, Plato and Socrates. The spiritual demotion of individual human consciousness forms the basis of the second section in this issue, and draws heavily on Schopenhauer and tentatively on Nietzsche – two philosophers who came close to Buddhist and Taoist positions in their suspicion of the Western faith in self-improvement through ever increasing knowledge; and two who used these traditions to promote a form of John Keats' negative capability. From the Anglo-Catholic T.S. Eliot to the spiritually nonconformist Beat Generation, such Eastern ambidexterity – the ability to hold contradictory ideas in mind and heart at once – was an attractive alternative to the monotheistic faith in a single authoritative, *desirable* truth.

In the third, 'ecological' section, the non-Judeo-Christian acceptance of the real in place of a yearning for the ideal, and interest in multiplicity over singularity are addressed in the context of deep time. Again in keeping with John Gray, but also with the myriad branches of cultural studies that have grown out of biologist Paul Krutzen's 2000 demarcation of the 'anthropocene', an analysis of twentieth century

anti-humanism in literature requires consideration of humanity's fleeting life span and expectancy. After dealing with authors who debunked myths first of the especial human body, then of reason as the force driving us towards a utopian end point, the issue moves on to the radical domain of impermanent humanity, inconsequent in the longer unfathomable history of geological time. This is the fragile/flimsy beauty of human life – experienced, observed and put into conversation with nature –towered over by the vastly more enduring beauty of what Julian Murphet calls a 'mineral poetics'. This is also that beauty translated 'weirdly' – as Aaron Jaffe would have it – into a human aesthetic that is alien to it. Besides Gray, who uses James Lovelock's Gaia theory to consider humanity as one more (extremely harmful) contributor to a planetary eco-system, the precedent for an investigation of geological anti-humanism is helpfully outlined by Jaffe through the following 'inhumanist rubrics': 'New media, Affect, Science and Technology Studies, Theory, Object-Oriented Ontology, Actor Network Theory, New Materialisms, Systems Theory, the Biopolitical, the Anthropocene, Accelerationism'.[20]

Of course, such rubrics also have a political dimension, and provide the general backdrop (or perhaps the 'background noise', as Jaffe describes H.P. Lovecraft's 'schlocky' science fiction in the context of modernist history) to essays in the final, longest section of the issue.[21] From T.E. Hulme in the 1910s through to the politically suspect activities of the Frenchman Louis-Ferdinand Céline and the American Henry Miller in the thirties and Michel Houellebecq in the late twentieth century, the reactionary ends to which anti-humanist ideas have been taken are read here against these authors' more productive philosophical aims. In Hulme's case, Henry Mead adds to the wider conversation around his pre-emption of post-1945 postmodernist theory by considering his suspicion of the kinds of communicatory patterns that would lead eventually to social media (and a social media age defined, as Jaffe puts it earlier in the issue, by 'a great haste' that 'overleaps uncertainty and initiates database construction').

In the cases of Céline and Miller, Andrew Hussey and I offer respective potentially humanistic purposes and outcomes in work that is suspicious of affect and very deliberately taunts its readers for their default compulsions towards compassion. The early century opposition between Romantic and Classical aesthetics, between

altruistic and egoist, deterministic and mechanistic ontologies are explored here as the intellectual historical basis for many of the questions about humanism that are currently fashionable in humanities scholarship. At the same time thinkers who were integral to modernist literature but fell out of fashion after 1945 – philosophers like Henri Bergson and Max Stirner– are brought into conversation with the 'inhumanist rubrics' Jaffe flags up.

Despite these common touchstones with Jaffe's 'Modernist Inhumanisms', this issue is more firmly, terrestrially grounded. Where the aim there was to outline modernism's 'inhuman revenant', a presumed dead, ghostly presence that functioned as 'modernism's [forgotten but] durable and idiosyncratic legacy across longer accounts of modernity', what we seek is something less weird and more philosophically historiographical.[22] Deviating not only from the particular ethical agendas of most post-humanist studies but also this speculatively realist focus on the inhuman, 'Anti-Humanist Modernisms' builds out from a first position to do with the animal materiality of the human form. Starting with various attempts to explore this – from the disgusted to the fascinated, the cold to the elated – it combs the modernist past for early expositions of the artificial borders that sustain human meaning: between human and animal corporeality, between reasoned thought and bodily experienced feeling, and between human destiny and non-human contingency. As Noah Yuval Harrari has pointed out, that meaning through fiction is the main reason the human animal has been able to cooperate in such unprecedentedly large numbers, to dominate on a planet-wide basis and to continue to perpetuate its most powerful myth of all – the myth of accumulative, inevitable and unstoppable progress. Rather than a revenant in the history of modernism, we're seeking a better understanding of the contribution modernists made to the exposition of these fictions; and appreciation of their sometimes constructive, sometimes destructive attempts to disabuse humanity of its collective delusions.

Implications

At the destructive end, of course, that meant siding with political projects whose horrific results left a permanent black mark on modernism's reputation. As most accounts of literary history attest, the brutal temperature change Wyndham Lewis

observed at the end of the 1910s brought with it a widespread avant-garde disdain for democracy. The radical political excesses of experimental poets Ezra Pound and the Futurist Filippo Marinetti have long been understood in connection to their manifestos for an art that was hard, forceful and purged of sentimentality; and Lewis added his two pennies both with his *Blast* manifesto and a glowing report on Hitler as emerging populist leader. Born with Kenner's recuperation of Pound, modernist studies remain duty-bound to continue grappling with these suspect affiliations, and an issue dedicated to anti-humanism in this period bears a particular responsibility. To this end, our authors have kept count of findings on fascism and modernism by scholars like Roger Griffin and Alec Marsh – who demonstrated that fascist literature was all the more shameful because motivated by exactly the romantic urges it claimed to abhor – and John Carey – who crystalized a wider academic sense of the Anglo-American high modernist period as an elitist aberration in twentieth century experimental writing (*The Intellectuals and the Masses* (1999)). But they have also attempted to consider modernist politics in a more nuanced light. Indeed, this issue is part of a larger, general effort since Carey to correct or at least complicate his totalising conclusions, and to remind readers of the often self-contradictory positions these political heretics took up.

Throughout, there is a strong sense that not only Pound and Marinetti's unapologetic involvement with fascist regimes, but the radically conservative leanings of T.E. Hulme, Wyndham Lewis and T.S. Eliot and even the ambivalence of writers like Virginia Woolf and Aldous Huxley about universal franchise were the direct result of their impatience with sentimentality not just in politics but aesthetics too. In fiction and reality, these literary artists posited the corrupt modern world as in need of remaking according not to utopian ideals of new psychological, social and emotional engagement but a network of historically reliable coordinates for truth and virtue. For Pound and Eliot in particular that network included icons and ideas of the Renaissance humanist tradition – Dante's moral scheme, for example, or the Troubadour aesthetics of Guido Cavalcanti – which they invoked in opposition to the Enlightenment model of progress symbolised by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Voltaire and others, and carried through Marx into the twentieth century.

But there is also an appreciation that – unlike the politically sure anti-humanism of the post-structuralists, for example – the scepticisms of the writers under discussion here were turned to often covert and always coded socially humanistic ends. As well as Hulme, whose brutal attacks on progressive politics were offset by a desire in fact to equip humanity with more realistic and sane means of organisation and cooperation, we hear about various figures of the 1930s, 40s and 50s who hoped to enlighten by registering grim grotesquerie and despair. Hulme, Henry Mead tells us, adapted Henri Bergson's theories of creative evolution to warn against rather than enthrone 'consciousness as something non-rational, fluid, unpredictable, half-unknown to its possessor'. Henry Miller, in the 1930s, caricatured the rationalized humanist compulsion towards sympathy in order – he thought – to break through the barrier between people and arrive at a new, truer form of compassionate communication. Likewise, Huxley – a new convert to spiritual esotericism and experimental psychologism in the 1930s – was on the look out for means of unifying a modern Western self caught and fractured by the trap of humanist ontology.

Djuna Barnes and Wyndham Lewis – both fascinated and amused by the same sense of entrapment, expressed on grimacing human faces – envisioned partial release by an acceptance of the animal mechanisms behind it. For Beckett – whom John Bolin connects to that great salvager of Nietzsche, Georges Bataille – as for Henry Miller, the grimace could be counteracted by the full bodily experience of laughter; which allows the human being, in Bataille's words, to 'sound the depths of worlds'. And for Matthew Feldman's subject, Thomas Merton, a nullifying post-Second World War secular humanism could be productively answered through the spiritually dignifying process of realising man's temporary and peripheral contribution to the universe.

Through writers like Merton and Huxley, like Miller and also the Englishman J.G. Ballard – all emblematic in their own ways of the post-1945 countercultural turn, but pessimistic about human perfectibility – 'Anti-Humanist Modernisms' aims to illustrate the under-acknowledged legacy of modernist ideas and aesthetics in the 1950s and 60s American renaissance. Departing from consensus readings of the post-World War Two countercultural revolution as intrinsically humanistic, we have aimed to draw attention to individuals and groups whose hopes for the future of art and humanity were steeped in an earlier, sceptical modernist tradition. A movement

conventionally presumed to have repudiated modernism – rejecting its cold ironic remove, its stickling for history and cleaving to past certainties – can be viewed in a clearer, less nostalgic light when its continuities with that period are revealed. Since it was also the cradle for many of our current moral and cultural mores, seeing the counterculture anew means seeing our own times anew too. An appreciation of modernist literature for its sceptical approach to humanism therefore brings it to bear in more ways than one on arguments about collective humanity today.

Asking diverse questions of modernism from 1910 to the present, the authors in *Anti-Humanist Modernisms* have worked indirectly to historicise our contemporary moment. We've used the long literary history of the twentieth century to shed light on an age in which humanist assumptions face renewed attacks from the right and the left; and in which sentimental aesthetics again appear to be at once both ubiquitous and widely scorned. Following Wyndham Lewis' theory of fashion – an endless series of 'corrective reaction' after 'corrective reaction' – the analysis over the next 150 pages teases the troubling but stimulating possibility, finally, that 'the brutal tap' might again be turning up, and that we might now be witnessing a revival of – or at least renewed nostalgia for – the antagonistic, inhuman turn that birthed modernism all those years ago.[23]

Notes

[1] Wyndham Lewis, 'The Caliph's Design', in *Wyndham Lewis: The Artist* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1939), pp. 207-320, p. 268. Originally published as *The Caliph's Design* (London: The Egoist, 1919).
[2] Ibid., p. 93.
[3] Max Stirner, *The Ego And Its Own*, ed. by David Leopold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 72
[4] Lewis, 'The Caliph's Design', p. 71.
[5] Paul Sheehan, *Modernism, Narrative and Humanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 181.
[6] Leon Surette, *The Modern Dilemma: Wallace Stevens, T.S. Eliot and Humanism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008).
[7] Ezra Pound, 'A Retrospect', *The Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. with an intro. by T.S. Eliot (London and Boston: Faber & Faber, 1954), pp. 3-14, p. 5. The cited passage originally appeared in 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste' in *Poetry* magazine (March, 1913).
[8] Elizabeth Kuhn, 'Toward an Anti-Humanism of Life: The Modernism of Nietzsche, Hulme and Yeats', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 4th ser., 34 (2011), 1-20, p. 3.

[9] Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. by Gunzelin Schmidt Noerr, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002 [orig. ed.: 1944]), p. 94.
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